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Subject: The True Law of the Household.

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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE TRUE LAW OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

“Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”—LUKE XIV., 12-14.

These words were spoken on the Sabbath-day. The Jews were excessively strict in one respect in keeping the Sabbath—namely, that of preventing labor; but it was entirely in accordance with the Jewish idea of Sabbath-keeping to make it a day of social festivity. Men were allowed to have their friends with them; and to have a feast was not a desecration of the Sabbath.

Our Master was a Jew; and where they did not contravene the great moral virtues, he fulfilled every social custom. We read, here, that he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath-day; and as it is said that there were Jewish Doctors and Scribes present, it is evident that there was a company gathered there. And this is not a solitary instance. Those who have a Christian prejudice against parties and large gatherings of people for social enjoyment, find no countenance for their prejudice either in the Old Testament or the New. There never was a people among whom there were so many feasts and festivals as among the Jews; and our Master himself, instead of setting his face against them, conformed to the customs of the people. Social festivity, with all appropriate hilarity, has received the sanction of Christ's example; and nowhere has it been rebuked by him.

We are not to accept these words which the Saviour pronounced during, or immediately consequent upon, this dinner, as literal. Indeed, you may say, in respect to Christ's instruction generally, that it reaches toward an inward principle all the time, and that we shall in no way miss it so surely as by attempting to take it in its most literal and formal method. If you were to accept this as a literal in-

junction, it would cut up by the roots all friendships among relations and neighbors.

“When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.”

It is certainly in accordance with the spirit of the New Testament, and I believe it to be strictly in accordance with this passage, under certain circumstances and in due measure, to invite your friends. But it is the *characteristic* that is here spoken of. If this is the characteristic feature of your hospitality, that it is simply a *quid pro quo*, an interchange, you giving so much, and receiving so much in return—you serving yourself while you are serving others—then your hospitality becomes a selfishness. It is a mere matter of commerce. But Christ teaches that every man’s hospitality must be a beneficence—as it cannot be where he receives, or expects to receive, a fair equivalent for it. Said he, “If you wish to exhibit before God and man a true hospitality that carries with it a real benevolence, exercise it toward those who cannot pay you back again. Let it be a genuine disinterested kindness, and not an exhibitory kindness.”

You will find the same mode of expression in the Sermon on the Mount:

“For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye?”

What! Am I to understand, then, that I must not love a man who loves me? No; only this: that if another man loves you, and you love him in return, there is simply an exchange. You give and take. And you must not pride yourselves on it. Anybody would do that. If you would show a higher trait, then you must learn to love men who do not love you. Anybody loves loveliness. Only he has a great nature who knows how to love things that are not lovable.

“If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so?”

Not that Christ forbids us to salute our familiar friends and acquaintances, but that we are not to think that in doing this we have fulfilled the whole duty of courtesy. There is a courtesy that requires us to salute others besides those who are our familiar friends. And I do not at all understand the passage which I have selected for my text to say that we must limit our hospitality and kindness to those who are outside of our circle in society—to the poor and the friendless; but that we must not limit them to those who are within our circle, and are rich, and can requite us in the same coin. The principle advanced, in other words, is that of a true, disinterested hospitality. It is a caution against your using benev-

olence in the service of selfishness. A man may interchange hospitalities and entertainments with friends and neighbors; but he must not consider these hospitalities and entertainments as kindnesses in any meritorious sense. It is in his own interest that he is acting when he exchanges courtesies with those who belong to his set; and there is a duty of kindness yet unperformed. Though a man may be very social, and may do much to promote good-will in his neighborhood, yet if he stops there he has not performed the whole of his duty of kindness.

This is a solemn warning against selfishness as dispensed under forms of benevolence. There is a danger in this regard which pervades life. Men employ good neighborhood as a lure and a guile. Those who hate men, treat them as though they loved them because it is for their interest to do it. Men compliment and flatter their neighbors, frequently, not at all as a token of sincerity, but against their whole judgment. They do it with a purpose. They use benevolence or kindness in some of its forms as a means of carrying out selfishness. Men are often profuse in offers of service, and sometimes also in performance of service, doing a great many things that are really kind indeed, but with an object in view; and that object is not to make other men happy, but by and by to take the fruit of this service. They calculate, as much as men do in commerce and in diplomacy, as if the things were reduced to a mere business transaction or political arrangement. Men are genial and hospitable as a matter of business. Indeed, they avowedly maintain hospitality as one of the portals of business. Great commercial houses have their "entertaining partner"; there is a regular bestowal of funds for his use, and it is expected that he will make customers comfortable and happy. I do not say that these things are wrong, and that they must not be indulged in; but they are not to be set down as evidences of benevolence. You must not rank them with acts of kindness. They are simply elements of self-service.

Our Master, in this passage, as in many others, significantly, and with singular insight into the tendencies of human nature, lays this caution and warning upon such a subordination of our nobler feelings. He bids us beware of loving through dissimulation; of kindness which is the offspring of selfishness; of hospitality which means nothing but an interchange of selfishness. Do not corrupt the fountains of the best feelings. Do not pervert the noblest and best tendencies by causing them to serve conventional selfishness, while they should serve true disinterested benevolence.

I propose to speak particularly, this morning, with reference to the household, calling your attention to the duty of employing it

for the great benevolent ends for which it was founded, and warning you against the perversions which we easily fall into by making it an almoner of selfishness.

The household is founded upon love ; and with all its imperfections it is still the best institution which society has ever had, or which it has now. Although it is very far from the social virtues in their highest form ; yet, nowhere else are these virtues so pure, so symmetrical and so full of beneficent fruits, as in the household. It is not, however, so shielded but that it is pierced by temptations. Though its foundations are the natural affections ; though it is very possible for father and mother to manifest love full of self-denial ; though every part of the household, acting in a little sphere, is drawn to every other part by the cords of true affection, which should produce a disinterested service of kindness ; nevertheless, the true love of the household and its disinterestedness are liable to be perverted to all the ends of selfishness.

Whenever, for instance, the household is builded and maintained purely for the purpose of securing sensuous comfort, it is so perverted. He who comes back from weary business, feeling that his whole family must serve him, has a mistaken idea of his duty as a member of that family. He is tired. No one therefore must lay upon him additional burdens. He has been stirred up all day ; and it is not for any one now to annoy him. His corner of comfort he will have ; and wife and children and servants must get out of his way, or come near only for the sake of pouring benefactions into his lap. "Have I not," he says, "been storm-beaten all day in the world ? and what is the use of a home, if a man must be worried and fretted the moment he gets into his house ?" He who makes the household a place where every person is to bow down to him and serve his selfishness, has perverted the fundamental idea of that institution. We are bound to take our part, and bear our lot, of service there. Nowhere more than in the household is this true :

"He whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."

They who think of the household merely as a place where they can eat and drink and sleep, have grossly perverted the whole divine conception of it. I fear there are persons who regard their house as a royal restaurant. They fill their cellar, they store their larder full, they order from the market ample supplies ; and all day they have the joyful thought of the dinner which awaits them when they return. And after dinner follow abundant potations. And then comes the long sleep. And in the morning they awake to no social duties, but only to bestir themselves for the work of the day. And in the midst of their toil they are buoyed up by the thought of the dinner,

of the supper, of the bed, of self-indulgence. And they have, in a magnified form, and with many embellishments, such a thought of their own house as we may suppose a pig has of his pen. It is a place where they are to swill, and grunt, and sleep!

To a man who has no conception of what God means by a disinterested social love, and who looks upon his house as simply the place where he is to be made happy in all his lower appetites, it is not the gate of heaven. Where the household is a realm, not of serving one another by love, but of seeking to have yourself served and looked up to, it is perverted.

I now speak of that which the Bible cautions us against.

"Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."

I speak of the despotism of parents. We hear much of the impertinence and upstart ways of Young America in the household. There *is* something of these things. There are dangers of either extreme. But there is also in the household, too often, a sense of men's liberty at home. They feel that there they are to let out all their selfishness, and temper, and caprice, and ill-will. There are those who walk the streets, where their interests require them to, courteous, and patient, seldom returning railing for railing; there are men who smell like a May morning all through the business hours of the day. They save their ugliness for their wife and children at home. When they come back at night, they are sharp, quick, irritable.

What is the reason that those who know you best can provoke you easiest? Is it because you lie open to those whom you are living with, that you cannot bear from them half as much as you can from those who are strangers to you? Is it because you are aware that they know you at an advantage? However that may be, it will be found that while there are some men that are gruff in business who are very tender and gentle and considerate at home, there are also some men that are polite and courteous out of doors and among their neighbors, their vanity holding them up to kindness, who, when they return home, are very peevish and impatient, and whose children must not have any freedom. The coming of the father into the house is oftentimes an end of all liberty to the little ones. The moment his footstep is heard, it is, "Hush! your father is coming, and you must not make a noise." Or, when the children are playing in another room, the servant or the mother is sent to quiet them; and it is, "Children, don't you know that your father has come home!" There has been so much noise where he has been through the day, that when he comes home, instantly everything in the house must walk with reference to his lordly pleasure and sovereign joy.

(I beseech of you, though, do not throw this up to each other when you go home; or if you do, let it be a fair division!)

How many households are there which every week, and perhaps every day, are scenes of rankling, and irritation, and discomfort, and disputation, and from which happiness is mostly banished! Now and then there is a radiant hour; but there are more gloomy, east-wind hours than there are of the other sort. "This house is mine," says the man; "and if one cannot do what he has a mind to at home, where can he?" Nowhere. The wickedest thing that a man can do, is to conspire to do what he has a mind to do, unless he has a mind to do what he ought to. We ought not to live to please ourselves;

"For none of us liveth to himself."

We are living to God; and what does that mean except living in the same temper in which God lives? He that makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust alike; He that out of his own affluent kindness and good-natured beneficence pours upon his creatures everywhere the bounties of the seasons—He it is that we are to live to, by living like him. If we be weary, there should be rest; if we be weak, there should be sustenance; and if we be crippled, there should be help. We have a right to take much from the family; but we must also bring much to the family. He who stands in the household like a candle in a golden candle-stick, as though it were instituted for him to burn in, and to promote his own comfort in, is not living toward God, but contrariwise.

Again, where a household is organized for the pleasure of the few that belong to it, and does not let its light shine out to others who are round about it, it is not fulfilling its true mission. I mean what we call "secluded families." Far be it from me to say that every house must have its doors wide open; or that every family should feel itself bound to "go into society," as the saying is; or that there is not a relative seclusion permissible under various circumstances. In all these matters you can never lay down a rule. But you can establish a principle; and the principle is this, that no man has a right to all the sweetness which is generated in his household. If there is virtue, if there is peace, if there is contentment there, in some way or other the community have a right to the influence of it.

The family is like a garden. There are some gardens (not many in this land, but in England I saw many,) with ten-feet brick walls built up, iron-spiked or glass-defended on the top. Within there was unknown treasure. I know not what; for I could not pierce through to see. There were vines with luscious clusters.

There were doubtless early apricots. There were fruits appropriate to the season. There was every color of flowers. Everything hung lush. Everything was full of glowing beauty. But these things were all hidden. There was not a lattice, nor even a peep-hole. No child, no weary workman, nobody, could see what was beyond the wall. The man within, bottled up, and lying back, had it all for his own enjoyment. And he said to himself, "This is my garden. What if my neighbors cannot see into it? I did not make it for my neighbors; I made it for myself. I have a right to be solitary. There shall be some place in this world where only I can go." So he secludes all that wealth of view. And yet, he would not be defrauded if some light and open fence permitted every poor sewing-woman to stop and breathe the perfume of the flowers, and look wearily at the things within. And the child that played by would regale itself. The laborer would be a happier man for looking upon the graceful sweep of ornamental trees, the cluster-laden vines, and the beds of purpled flowers. Nobody would be cheated because these fed the taste and enjoyment of unnumbered ones besides the owner.

A man's family is, to be sure, in some way his own garden; he has a right in some sense to its exclusiveness; but I say that a father and a mother who are bringing up their children to truth and honor and virtue, owe a debt to society. They must in some mode interchange relations with those among whom they live, so that the whole neighborhood shall have the benefit of their household thrift. We have no right to draw ourselves back in such a way that the children of the neighborhood shall be deprived of the stimulus and sympathy which they naturally would have from every successful and harmonious family.

There is a great deal of selfishness in seclusion. Many men flatter themselves that they are not proud, because, as they say, they would not live in such a point of observation as some of their neighbors do. They flatter themselves that they are not vain, but modest and retiring. Well, whether you are proud and vain or not, you are selfish. You are hiding your light under a bushel. God has blessed you, and made you rich, and given you power to do good to many of your fellow men by your example. And one example is worth a thousand precepts. There is many and many a sweet household that might breathe inspiration of a better mode of life all through the neighborhood; but it is shut up like a garden with a high wall around it. It is known that there is something there, but no one knows what it is. Such a seclusion of a household is a perversion of it; and we have no right to make our households selfish.

I also advocate the right and duty of all appropriate expenditure:

upon the household. There are a great many who amass wealth, and do not use it. I have known communities in which the richest men were the plainest livers; and it was accounted to them as a virtue. If a man choose to live plainly in order that he may use his funds in the service of the public, building beneficent institutions, diffusing knowledge, and strengthening all the great forces of virtue in the community, I say that he is doing a very noble thing. If a man says, "I will live in a humble cottage in order that I may make it possible for thousands of others who live in shanties to live as I do," he is benevolent. But where a man accumulates his thousands and hundreds of thousands every year, and then lives very plainly at home, and dresses very plainly, and does not diffuse his wealth among others, I do not praise him. What is he doing with his money? Breeding it. Dollar begets dollar. A thousand dollars has another thousand for its child. And what does he do with his increasing means? He puts them to breeding again. He lives plain, you know. He sets a frugal table. Though he is a rich man, he wears a threadbare coat: he is not proud. He wears a rusty old hat: he is not proud. He goes poorly clad: he is not proud. No, you are not proud, but you are greedy and avaricious; and you live meanly in order that you may make money, more than you can spend, and more than you need, and do nothing with it. I do not praise that. If all the surplus funds which you are accumulating were being expended in rearing schools in the neighborhood, and in giving workmen better sewerage, better light, better ventilation, and better food, that would be noble. To live close that others may live better is praiseworthy; but for a man of ample means to live meanly in order that he may have more useless money than he already has—that I do not praise.

I say that where a man has means, not only has he a right to spend it on his own house and grounds, but it is his duty to do it. Where God has given a man wealth, and where he has more money than is required for the necessities of life, he is bound to live better than he otherwise could. The progress of civilization is from coarseness toward fineness; it is from simplicity toward complexity; it is from little toward much; and he who builds a home, and furnishes it so that it is a glowing center of beauty, and then administers his family so that it shall be an exemplar of virtue and culture in the community, spends his money, not on himself or his family, but on the community. For his family becomes an institution of education; its example will tempt thousands and thousands of men in the lower walks of life to struggle higher, and it will be a continual proof and exhibition to them of what virtue can bring to a

man. I therefore hold that Christian benevolence permits a man to build large and beautifully, and that a household ought to be a specimen of taste, and that one ought to make it the product of regal wealth where he can.

But all luxury, and all beauty, and all bounty must have the effect of bringing you into sympathy with your fellow men, and not of repelling you from them, and creating a separation between you and them.

And here is a very searching principle. You have a right to spend on yourself and your family as much as you can consistently with a growing sympathy with your fellows; but the moment your expenditures on your equipage, or on your domestic economy, set you aside from men, and lift you out of sympathy with them, you have gone too far. No man has a right to separate himself from his fellowmen.

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Do not study your own happiness alone, but see to it that with your happiness is carried up the happiness of those around about you. There is a subtle element at work all the time in this regard. God will not permit a man to go up a great way unless he draws up, relatively, others around about him. And when men attempt to live far above their fellowmen, everything is pulling them down—and it ought to. No man has a right to build himself up selfishly for himself. A man so built up is like a tower standing without any Cathedral under it, and meaning simply a tower.

I believe, therefore, in the Christian privilege of ample living, and of a wise, discreet use of one's means, for raiment, and household furniture, and equipage; but all these things imply a corresponding augmentation of genuine helpfulness, and tenderness, and kindness, and thoughtfulness of others. If, when you have built your house, you are further off than ever before from your fellow men, then you have built wrong, or you are administering wrong. If when you were living in a poor house, every one seemed like a friend, and you were familiar with everybody; and if now that you are in your new house, your acquaintances drop away from you, and your company, as it is said, is "small and select," then you are growing selfish; you are perverting your household; you are using those elements of beauty and bounty which have been put into your hands for purposes, not of benevolence, but of selfishness.

No man can make a general rule for a matter of this kind; but if you find that your indulgence in wealth is making you a more sympathetic, a better-hearted, a more social man, do not be afraid;

God will not enter into judgment with you. But if you find that your indulgence in wealth is making you colder, less generous, and less thoughtful for others, you have good reason to be afraid: your wealth will be your mausoleum; you will be buried in it; you will be a dead man long before you die.

A word as to *hospitality*. It is impossible that all communities should be hospitable according to the same method; for hospitality goes by national custom. In the Orient, the custom in regard to hospitality used to require that no person should go past your door at evening without being called in. It was a beautiful custom; and it could be carried out in the times of the patriarchs; but it would be impossible for us to do the same thing now. Our houses would be thoroughfares of imposition in these crowded cities. It is said that we entertain angels unawares; but in that case we should entertain burglars, too. This promiscuousness of entertainment would not comport with the organization of society as it exists in the day in which we live. Hospitality must be modified, therefore, by the manners and customs of the age in which it is administered. But it is our duty in a general way to employ the whole force of our organized households for the exercise of kindness toward those who need kindness. I believe it is a man's duty to entertain people who do not belong to his family. Of course, that duty may be limited by the question of health, strength, and means. A thousand circumstances may affect it. Nevertheless, the general truth remains, that no man has a right to construct a house, and have a household, and employ them simply for promoting his own happiness. Every man owes it to the community to employ his house as a kind of church-hospital, or a kind of bounty-house, out of which shall issue such tokens of good-will and of kindness as shall make men better and wiser. And here, I think, is where we certainly fail. We rarely use our houses as much as we can for the real promotion of happiness in others.

I honor those gentlemen in New York who, having the ability to create galleries of pictures, are accustomed, one or two days in the week, to throw open their doors to any who will apply for a permit. That is as it should be. I think no man has a right to own a beautiful picture, and keep it for his own looking at. It is a wicked thing—as wicked as it would be for a man, if he had a book of poems which was calculated to thrill every heart, and if that were the only copy in the world, to seclude that copy, and let nobody read it but himself.

I sometimes see a picture on exhibition in New York which is full of comfort to me. It fattens my eye. It cheers my soul. I go

once, twice, thrice, to look upon it. Then it is appropriated, and drawn out somewhere. "Who has it?" I ask. "Mr. Blank has it." "Cannot I see it?" "No, he won't let anybody see a picture."

I know the case of a man in New York who has the noblest collection of books, probably, in the United States of America, and you can get into a penitentiary easier than you can get into his library to see them! They are almost as absolutely hidden as they would be if they were in the crypts of Egypt. What monstrous selfishness is this: that a man should fill his house with things that would cheer and delight men, and refuse to let men see them! I tell you, you ought to feel guilty who have locked up in portfolios pictures which might please and benefit others, and who will not allow them to be seen. There is no excuse in the case of pictures; for the eyes do not waste them as fingers do books. A million men might look at your treasures, and they would be none the worse.

If you are filling your house with objects which have the power to delight and profit, that house and its contents are in some sense a debt which you owe to the community; and you are in danger of being made selfish through fine art and taste. Cursed be that selfishness which comes through the medium of beauty!

More than that, I think we owe our table, to a certain extent, to persons who are outside of our own families. This, I say again, is not to be rigidly applied under all circumstances. It is not meant that every person who is scarcely able to drag one foot after the other shall add to tasks already too great for the sake of entertaining others. Make all rational excuses, and set apart as many cases as you please, and yet the general truth is this, that our entertainments are not according to the law of love.

I do not say that there shall not be any great fashionable parties; but when you have given a fashionable party, what have you done? Have you not done precisely that which our Master execrated in the passage which I have selected? Have you not invited the man that indorsed for you, the woman that stood high in society, the people that would bring in a glitter of reputation to you? You have in your house a large crowd of people, and among them many notables; and you get a reporter with them; and the next day there appears in the paper a whole list of the names of those present; and the occasion is represented as being a "distinguished," a "magnificent" reception; and there is lavish praise of your lavish expense. And what have you done but to offer sacrifice to your own vanity?

Do you like these people? When the question arises as to who shall be invited, Mr. A. is mentioned. "Poh! Don't invite him."

"But, my dear, you know he is a man of position and influence, and we must invite him." "Well, I suppose it must be done." "Then there is B." "Oh, we don't want him!" "But don't you remember how polite he has been to us? Of course he must be invited." And so the alphabet is gone through with; and this one and that one are invited, not because their society is preferred, but as a sacrifice to vanity and pride—from any other motive rather than benevolence.

Why do you laugh when I speak of these things? Have you known anything of the kind?

Did you ever read this chapter in the Bible, and bring it home to yourself? Did you ever think, when you were employing your table and your saloon for such a purpose, that you were going in the face and teeth of the explicit example and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ? While you were giving magnificent entertainments to those whom you cared nothing about, and also while you were entertaining those who were your friends, have you thought that you were coming short of the fulfillment of the injunction contained in our text? I do not object to a grand fashionable entertainment occasionally, if it is only one thrown in among many truly hospitable entertainments.

You come a little nearer the spirit of this passage when you bring in all your friends—your brothers and sisters, and cousins, and relatives generally—and have a family gathering. This is very well; but you have not touched benevolence yet. Do you ever, from one end of the year to the other, entertain any besides those whom you love, and those whom it is your interest to entertain? If your front door opens, and satins and silks come rolling in, how obsequious and rejoiced you are that such distinguished honor is paid to you! Or if your front door opens at some other time, and your beloved aunt and cousins enter, your heart bounds merrily. They come to see you, and you go to see them, and it is a fair exchange. But if, on another occasion the door opens, and it is some poor person that presents himself, you say, "Go down to the basement door; there are cold victuals there for you." Not that I consider that a man must entertain all the beggars that come to his door. One cannot make his house a refuge for all that come and ply him with importunity. Nevertheless, the thing stands apparent. You have no right to sacrifice your hospitality to vanity in the outermost circle of your acquaintances, or even to confine it to the circle of those whom you love. There must be a hospitality which takes hold of benevolence; and it must be exercised under conditions in which you give and do not receive. There must be something in it of the nature of bearing for others. It must cost you something of

thought, and labor, and fatigue, to give benefaction where there is no expectation of getting anything back. And it must take place under circumstances such that your remuneration shall consist in the pleasure of doing good to other people.

There is the law, the ideal, of a Christian household. Will you fulfill it? Have you ever done by your family and household all that you could do in a Christian community? I am not your judge. Judge ye!

There is a great difficulty in the use of our families as largely as might be, arising from the perverse habits of society. My friends, I do not think we live too well; but I think we live a great deal too burdensomely. We organize too complexly. We live in houses larger than we need. We wear ourselves out in taking care of unnecessary conveniences. We insist upon dressing too well. The labor and pains of supplying and keeping in order our wardrobe for receiving our friends are too great. We spread our table too variously and too expensively; so that when we have entertained hospitably our friends once or twice in a year, we quit. It would be better if we were simpler in our mode of living. And it is not necessarily the case that in living simpler we shall live less expensively; for simplicity is sometimes ornate and expensive; but I think that if we were content to give and take less, we should meet oftener, and with a kindlier feeling.

Nothing is better for men and women than to be brought into social relations, where all are intent on making each other happy, and where each sees the pleasanter side of the other's nature. We have shadows enough, tears enough, struggles enough, and rivalries enough; and it is a good, a civilizing, a Christianizing thing, to bring men together every week where it is their business to try to make each other happy. And if the processes of society were not so complex and expensive, we could do it far oftener than we do now.

A man in Germany was invited to tea by a literary friend. On reaching the house and going into the supper-room, he found on the table a pitcher of water and a loaf of bread, and nothing more. They sat and cut the loaf, and ate it, and moistened their lips with pure water, and talked. I, of course, think that that was the extreme of barrenness. I should scarcely give such an entertainment, or wish to go to many of that kind. But while that was extreme in one direction, we go to the extreme in the other direction. If we would spread our table more plainly, if our whole method of conducting the household were simpler and more easy, it would be more convenient and pleasanter for us to extend hospitality to each other.

The Pharisaism of the broom and dust-cloth is as oppressive as the

Pharisaism of phylacteries. We are swallowed up in formalities. Everything must be ordered just so. Our houses require and receive so much work and service to make them shine, that when we get through with them we have no time for our friends and neighbors. The kitchen requires so much, and the dining-room requires so much, and the pantries require so much, and the other parts of the house require so much attention, that we are constantly slaving and toiling. Therefore we cannot afford to entertain our friends often.

If we are going to have the best organization of the family, and the most fragrant intercourse between house and house, we must take a lower key in our civilization. I think we shall come to it by and by. I think we are in the midst of a rank and abnormal growth just now; but we are gradually coming out of that, I think.

And what I have just been saying is not inconsistent with what I said in regard to the propriety of using wealth in the family. Making provision of substance is a very different thing from adopting burdensome methods and economies of life. We work ourselves up to an unnatural and unwholesome state by a thousand attritions that spring from the complex organizations which we introduce into our modes of living. And we cannot have freedom and joyous intercourse until we are less of slaves to the opinions of others.

I honor a woman who comes to me, when I call at her house, in just the dress that is fitted to the work which she is doing. If I am swallowed up in an abyss of plush in the parlor three-quarters of an hour waiting that she may come down with her Sunday suit on, I do not thank her. If, on the contrary, I call at a house, and the woman is kneading bread, and she comes to me saying, "It is impossible, sir, but that I must see you as I am," that is just the way am glad to see her.

If you are sitting at your table with your children, and a friend comes in late, ask him to sit down and eat such food as there is on the table; and if he does not like it, let him go somewhere else. If you fail in the requirements of hospitality by reason of sickness, or from any other unavoidable cause, an apology may be due; but ordinarily, if persons come into your house, make them welcome, show that you are glad to see them, and let that suffice.

This use of the household for all is peculiarly necessary, not simply as a part of the moral education of ourselves and of our children, but also for political and social reasons here in America. We are a vast nation of equal citizens. Nevertheless, there is nowhere that class-lines are more sharply drawn than in this country. There is the class that exists by force of ideas; there is the class that

exists by force of wealth; there is the class that exists by force of fashion. We are broken up into sets and cliques; and there are no walls that separate one class from another more effectually than does the etiquette of society in our large communities.

We need to have society move on its own particles just as easily as water does. There cannot be wholesome water unless a circulation of the particles is going on incessantly. There cannot be a wholesome atmosphere where there is not a moving of the particles all the time on each other. And there can be no health in society where those who are fit for it cannot plunge below it, and move up into it. This principle of movableness by which one may take the position for which he is fitted by his birth, this revolving, cleansing, ventilating, purifying principle, is a principle of Christian democracy. It is a principle which more than any other will promote a true feeling of brotherhood among men.

You are not better than your neighbors simply because you are richer than they are. You are not finer than they are simply because your hand is softer than theirs. Though knowledge generally goes where there is opportunity, still there are many wise men who are not educated. There are many noble men and women in very lowly places. And when you exercise a true hospitality, when you "condescend to men of low degree," you rise up better remunerated than they do. There is something in the higher forms of society which tends to conventionalism and artificiality; but in the lower ranges of society there is more naturalness. Neither the high nor the low are perfect; neither of them are whole men and women; we are all partial, whether we be at the top, middle, or bottom of society; and something we certainly need: we need each other. Those who are high need to feel the sympathy of those who are low; and those who are low are wonderfully helped and cheered in the way of life if they are permitted to take hold of the hands of those who are high. We are traveling together. Let us therefore help one another, by counsel, by personal intercourse, and by the use of the household. Let us help each other according to the Christian ideal, that "we are members one of another." Let that idea pervade our hearts. Let it enter into our lives, our commerce, and our political intercourse. Let it be the law of our households. Let us administer our lives and social relations, and beneficences, and hospitalities so that all who are around about us shall feel that out of our houses and out of our hearts comes the true spirit of religion.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Blessings on that man's house and establishment which is down

hill from every poor man's heart, and towards which he goes as naturally as water runs down-hill; and woe to that man's house and prosperity which is up-hill from poor men's hearts, and on whose door-step they stand and chatter, and shiver, and go away feeling that there is no helper and no friend there. God bless the bounty of wealth; God bless the bounty of a true nature of refinement; and God bless a hospitality and benevolence that does not seek self under the garb of kindness, but that seeks real kindness by kind ways.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

Thou knowest us, our heavenly Father, better than we know ourselves. Thine undeeivable eye pierces through every disguise. Whatever we may hide from each other, we hide nothing from God. Naked and open are we before Him with whom we have to do. While it fills guilt with fear and pain thus to be known, it brings hope to penitence. For if thou, knowing all that is, and all that has been, and all that shall be, or can be in us, dost still reach out to us the arms of love; if thou dost speak forgiveness and encouragement to us, what need we fear? They to whom we go among men may be weary, but thou art never weary. Others may be surprised with out-breaking wickednesses, or sins, or evils, but thou knowest us altogether; and whatever is possible in man is familiar to thee. And yet, we are told that we have a merciful High Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who has been himself tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin; and we are called to come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and help in time of need.

Be gracious, this morning, to every burdened heart, to every darkened conscience; to every one upon whom rests heavily the memory of past sins; to every one who stands now burdened and oppressed with transgression. Look graciously upon those who are environed with temptation. May they be conscious that they that are for them are stronger than any strength that can resist them.

Grant, we pray thee, O God, that there may be breathed into every one, this morning, the consciousness that thou art the Healer, and that thy hand is stretched out not to punish us, but to save us; that thou wouldst not destroy, but rather reclaim, and reform, and beautify, and present before the throne of God, without blemish or spot, those who have been justified by thy grace, and restored by thy love. And may there be a heart of faith in every one. May all those who are conscious of their defects, and their deep sinfulness, look up from their innumerable stumblings and transgressions, and find the way of peace this morning, and draw near therein to God, and receive strength and comfortable words for days to come.

Look, O Lord, with compassion upon us, and say to us as thou didst to her of old, Go and sin no more. And then, Lord, thou must go with us. Then thy grace must abide in our hearts. For we shall again enact the same follies. The same pride, and the same vanity, and the same selfishness, and the same self-will, and the same self-indulgence, and the same mighty temptations, are outspread all around about us; but if thou wilt take us by the hand, we shall walk and not fall. If thou wilt pervade our souls by thy illuminating Spirit, then we shall not be the children of darkness, but shall walk continuously in the light. If that peace which passeth all understanding abound in us, we shall not desire forbidden things, nor turn away from the straight and narrow path. Grant, then, thy presence. May we walk with thee. Come thou and abide with us.

We pray that thou wilt multiply the joys of those who have already found joy in thy presence. Enrich their hearts who have already tasted of thy grace and thy mercy. Not only may they desire to rejoice and to be happy before thee, but may they desire that their joy shall be as an offering of praise. May their lives, luminous with thy grace, shine out upon other men, and become the guides of their darkened lives.

We pray, not only that in all things we may add grace to grace, but that each grace may grow finer and more heavenly. May we have the lore and literature of this spiritual and inward life. And from day to day may we find ourselves mounting up on nobler thoughts, with nobler purposes,

with more patience, and more sweetness, and more light, and more peace. And may our life at last be as a grand chorus, full of joy and gladness.

And we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon our households, wherever they are. Wilt thou abide in them. Māy thy Spirit dwell with us, and purge away all our selfishness, and all low and worldly desires. May we know how to exalt our lives in our relations one to another, and bear each other up, and carry each other's burdens, fulfilling the law of love.

We pray, O Lord, that thou wilt pour thy Spirit out upon all the young in this congregation. We thank thee that there are so many who have been nurtured in the Lord, and who have grown up into man's estate with all the evidence of a true piety. We pray that multitudes more, following on, may find their footsteps walking ever in the right way. May they find the way of virtue and of truth to be a pleasant way. And though thou dost, in thy providence, do mysterious things, or permit them to be done, may we have confidence that if we bring up our children aright, they shall not depart from instruction and from habit. And when we are gone, they shall fill our places, and carry forward the work which we have imperfectly begun.

We pray that thou wilt grant that all our schools may come up in remembrance before thee. Wilt thou fill the hearts of those that teach with divine light and the Divine Spirit. May they not count their own convenience dear to them. May they not do their *duty*, but rather their *love*. May they rejoice to labor in Christ's name for the welfare of those who are less favored than they.

And we pray that thou wilt grant that many, by their fidelity, and by wise instructions, may be reclaimed from evil, and brought into the Christian life, and built up in all godliness.

Bless, we pray thee, this church, and all its officers, and all its interests; and unite it more and more in every good word and work. And we pray for thy blessing to rest upon the churches around about us. We rejoice that thou dost not look with sinister eye upon those who differ from us. Thou art a God of mercy, and all who are seeking thee are of thy church; and thine arm is thrown around about the universal band of those who, to-day, are seeking, though it may be in twilight or in darkness, their way toward God. Bless them abundantly. And we pray that thou wilt take away what error remains. Wilt thou straighten the crooked paths. Wilt thou more and more abase the things that are high, and exalt the things that are low. And may the day speedily come when love shall triumph over hatred, and over selfishness, and over all evil ways whatsoever, and when thy kingdom shall come and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

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
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
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